REVOLUTIONARY

CELLS

INTERVIEW

translated by arm the spirit

The following interview was translated by Arm The Spirit from Radikal #147.

Interview with an RZ

Last year, one Revolutionary Cell (RZ) released a discussion paper, in which they announced and explained the end of their politics. Since then, there has been an all-encompassing discussion of the positions of the Revolutionary Cells and their actions, one like there has never been before. We, another RZ, one that has been active around the refugee campaign, would like to make known our critiques of this and to put forward our own positions. Some comrades from Radikal have written down some questions, which we are now writing public replies to. Our interest is that these questions and answers be discussed further, because we feel that a broad discussion of the refugee campaign and of the politics of the Revolutionary Cells is very important right now. We cannot be and do not want to be separated from people and groups who are developing radical resistance, and who have put forward militant politics up until today. This discussion will have an impact on our further politics. We think that the discussions concerning the paper "Gerd Albartus is Dead" are important as well, although we do not touch on these at this time.

Read and discuss this text, do not be sparing in your critique, and write something about it. Pass it around, publish it in your media. Anyone who would like to discuss the history of the Revolutionary Cells and the Rote Zora up until today can now get a collection of all the assembled texts in the book "Fruechte des Zorns", published by ID-Verlag.

Radikal: You all do not belong to the traditional line of the Revolutionary Cells. How did you come to the decision to call yourselves an RZ? In order to come into a political connection with the refugee campaign of the traditional line and to make some continuity from this, you could have chosen a different name. Then you could have made it known that you are different, but still part of the refugee campaign. Why did you decide differently?

RZ: We need to explain something further regarding this. We are a group of men and women who are range from the autonomist to the feminist spectrum. Even before we joined the refugee campaign as an RZ, we were involved in developing a militant resistance. On a thematic level, we had not established ourselves, but we always sought to renew an internationalist outlook. We saw our actions as part of the discussion around militant resistance. But the hoped-for discussions never came about.

We asked ourselves the following questions: How can we bring some political continuity to the highs and lows associated with movement-orientation? How is militant resistance to be envisioned and further developed as a part of this? The Revolutionary Cells were and still are one attempt at bringing continuity to the militant resistance. They never stated that militant struggle was

the only main focus. Their declared wish was always to be a part of the movement, to take part in its positions and discussions, and to know its strengths and weaknesses. This self-understanding, we believe, is still relevant today.

We believe that the concept of "de-individualization" which was propagated by the Revolutionary Cells - we call it "broadening" - namely that as many groups as possible should independently organize themselves as Revolutionary Cells, is still correct. Every group should decide on its own expectations for its own militant struggle and should work on its own content in discussions. We support this, even if we have criticisms of how this concept has been taken up and changed around.

As late as the '86 refugee campaign, it was not clear whether the principle of the Revolutionary Cells was still valid. The "de-individualization" concept was no longer propagated. For the first time, the refugee campaign was made into a major focus, without there being any movement within the radical-left behind it. This, and the fact that the refugee campaign was being carried out by a closed circle of Revolutionary Cells, raised the question in our minds of whether it was even possible to take part in the refugee campaign as an RZ. Based on various convictions, we decided that it was. For us as a mixed group, it was important that we draw on the history of both militant groupings, the Revolutionary Cells and the Rote Zora. We realize that we cannot avoid the contradiction of opposing patriarchal structures as a mixed group. Only through permanent discussions can a basis for cooperation be made in a militant group. That doesn't mean that you must get held up on each point. Women organize themselves independently of men and mixed groups, partly from confrontation and the setting of boundaries. There were problems between the men and the women in the Revolutionary Cells, and the women drew the necessary consequences from this.

We are part of this history in the history of revolutionary struggle in Germany, because we sought this not only in our minds, but also in our hearts.

We want to orient ourselves along with other militant groups and begin a common discussion. This seemed more feasible to us within the Revolutionary Cells, because of their long history of resistance, than with other militant groups, whose continuity we could not estimate. The decision to struggle as a Revolutionary Cell was, at the same time, out contribution to the continuity and unity of the further development of a revolutionary resistance. We wanted to present our proposals and questions so as to advance the refugee campaign.

We had in mind our conviction to make known this step of our practical intervention and to begin a discussion. These attempts, for different reasons, we not correct for us, and we see it as a mistake that we did not seek this dialogue before our action, because our goal was also to dismantle the myth of the Revolutionary Cells. But our approach only reproduced this myth.

Radikal: What ties you all to the original concept of the Revolutionary Cells? Do you still follow the concept of "de-individualization" ("Create one, two, many..."), which the

Revolutionary Cells used to propagate?

RZ: We are tied to the original concept of the Revolutionary Cells, which is still a useful concept for us for further developing a form of revolutionary politics.

The quality lies in autonomist organizing, which takes into account unsimultaneous political and structural matters, but still allows for the possibility of common organizing so as to become a political factor. Behind this concept is the view that resistance should not be limited in terms of its practical action possibilities.

This concept transports the experience that militant politics can be developed from out of day-to-day life and the legal associations. We continue to see in this concept the possibility for a broadening of the slogan "Create one, two, many...". But not conceived of as an action-model, whose means are separated from the political content discussion. Something along these lines: action, discussion, anchoring, de-individualization. This is too linear and static. Discussion, anchoring, and further political development have to be imbedded in a process of discussion and exchange. And by political discussion, we mean more than just releasing communiques.

Radikal: Do you see yourselves as an avant-garde or as part of a movement, in which you simply have a different praxis?

RZ: The answer of this question depends on what political context you use the term "avant-garde" in.

This term has its understanding in ML-politics. For our structures, this term is useless, because we (should) have a different political understanding, from which arises a different form of organizing.

The problems and contradictions within our structures cannot be understood or solved with this notion. But this notion gets utilized nonetheless, so as to make conflicts and contradictions clear (for example, informal hierarchies, male political consciousness, vagueness, etc.). Even the choice between "avant-garde or part of a movement" does not solve these problems.

When, for example, a group takes an initiative and thereby makes political pretensions, then discussion work becomes decisive. If this does not succeed or is neglected, then the initiative becomes isolated. This distance is then often explained with the notion an avant-garde. Frequently, the tension between militant and non-militant praxis becomes a problem, because a hierarchical valuing of methods gets applied.

Radikal: The traditional line has, to a certain extent, abandoned this concept (de-individualization), without offering much comment as to why. How do you envision cooperative work between the Revolutionary Cells and the so-called legal movement?

RZ: Over the last few years, there has been no cooperation with the legal movement. We think this is because the process of exchange has been abandoned, or at least not developed. This

inability, to be always present in the political process as an RZ, is something we ALL face. The praxis of the Revolutionary Cells is only deemed to be marginal, and their contribution to revolutionary politics seems to be relatively modest. We don't think that world historical changes are what have led to the weakness of the Revolutionary Cells, but rather our own neglect, mistakes, and unclarities, but also the lack of reference within the movement. We envision cooperation, but what problems and contradictions does this involve?

One problem is anchoring the politics of the Revolutionary Cells in the unsimultaneous nature of left-wing struggles, both in terms of content and methods. From this come the problems of discussion and exchange. This isn't simply about the fact that a political orientation is not taken up, for example the one spelled out in the Muenster/Duesseldorf communique in '89. At that time, it was increasingly clear that the left had taken up the regroupment demand of the political prisoners as its focus, and along with this was the solidarity movement for Ingrid Strobl's trial. Thus, to simply carry on with the refugee campaign and to simply side-swipe the unsimultaneousness ("repression won't be broken by simply protesting against repression itself, but rather by anchoring social-revolutionary politics") was wrong and brought no results. The relationship of exchange between militant groups and the movement won't come about automatically and is not established by simply releasing action communiques. Militant actions can't be monolithic features on the political landscape, and their results can't simply be left up to political dynamics.

To further develop a process of exchange, and to broaden it, we see the following things as being necessary:

- The movement must actively involve itself in the open discussion which has been started concerning the self-criticism of the Revolutionary Cells.

- The militant groups must make the public discussion of their relationship to the movement an open one.

For this, we need a common discussion forum, and Radikal, for example, has been very helpful in this.

In general, the Revolutionary Cells need more of a presence, and they need to take part in actual debates and events and to join in the discussion. The Revolutionary Cells need to think about re-activating their own communications medium ("Revolutionaerer Zorn").

The exchange should also involve refugee and immigrant women and men, so that the discussion can also be carried out in those areas.

Radikal: Within the traditional line, there were never very many concrete proposals of how to tie their own structures into larger spaces. The authors of "The End of Our Politics" wrote: "In the fixation on our methods of struggle, we failed to develop a political orientation which contained more than background pieces

on certain conflicts. Our social-revolutionary theoretical understanding was little more than a mosaic of the sum total of commentaries and analyses of various fields of resistance, thus a solid connection was not possible in this manner." They stated that the method of struggle which they themselves propagated as a "method for everyone" was, in fact, more of an action-method than a political theory. There were times when it was massively taken up (for example, during the anti-Startbahn and anti-nuclear movements). But upon reflection, these really just seemed like small tastes of rebellion, which did not develop long-term organizing. What significance does this method have for you? Do you have an ideas of how to link your praxis to the organization debate?

RZ: It is, of course, true that the concept of the Revolutionary Cells has not yet been able to further develop itself in terms of organizing content. But a convincing concept of content on its own will certainly not guarantee this further development, thus this can be abandoned as well.

The same is true for practical matters. No developments can come from praxis alone. It's up to the process within the movement itself to make it possible for a concept to be further developed, because this can't be thought of or adapted in a static manner. A militant group, just like any other group, must be flexible, so that it can react to social changes or to developments within the left and be present for further action. That means that it is wrong to become fixated on one form of struggle or to have it become ritualized, because nothing is made dynamic or further developed from this.

No group or association can avoid this process. The movement's organizational structure clearly shows its mess. No grouping can assume that another group will take up content or practical proposals, join in the discussion, or become a part of the work. This condition has to be kept in mind when doing actions, because a division of labor is a two-way responsibility, and not a discussed consequence of the movement. Every group also faces the necessity of taking all the work upon itself, which implies very high demands and which can quickly lead to too much pressure. That also means that campaigns which are initiated need to be reflected upon and discussed, if the possibility exists that nothing will develop from them.

The Revolutionary Cells also attempted to start discussions which were not sufficiently taken up and discussed (concerning the murder of Karry, knee-cappings/Korbmacher, Love Song). As for the refugee campaign, the discussions should have started much earlier. An organizational debate is also necessary and must concern content, and not primarily methods, if a broad base is to be sought.

There were phases when militant methods were taken up on a massive scale, and we think this is because, from the status of the political confrontation, more political sense was derived from the concrete experiences which pointed to such methods. The fact that no long-term organizing came out of this is, we think, due to the fact that the political movement at that time failed,

in that it was not able to develop any communication of a political content or perspective. Continuing to carry out militant actions will not rescue a failed political situation.

Radikal: In the open discussions which have been carried out between different Revolutionary Cells over the past year, it has become clear that their organizing was oriented towards praxis. Without a doubt, it is necessary to link practical concerns, but there's still the danger that things will fall apart if there is no commonly-discussed content orientation behind this structure. How do you all evaluate the contradiction between practical organizing and content agreement?

RZ: We don't see things exactly as you do. At least as far as the refugee campaign is concerned, there had to have been a content agreement between the various groups involved.

It's very difficult for us to come up with a satisfying answer to this question. We have not taken part in these internal discussions.

But, we can come up with some general criticisms, about the "action-model", for example. But the open discussions up until this point don't offer much of a basis for coming up with a definitive judgement. The clarity which is needed for this is up to the groups involved to achieve. Various estimations regarding this, what happened and how, have been made partially clear in previously published papers ("The End of Our Politics", "When the Night is Deepest...the Day is Nearest", "We Have to be as Radical as the Reality").

For us, it's still unclear whether these deal with fundamental differences or belated reassessments of positions. In the mid-80s, very fundamental discussions were carried out. The differences in content led to consequences (the departure of the RZ that wrote the paper "When the Night is Deepest..."). This process was made known, in a fragmentary manner, afterwards. That makes the discussion difficult. By going it alone, the RZ that wrote "The End of Our Politics" probably gives a good illustration of the actual situation regarding the internal discussions. It's also difficult to assess the Rote Zora and their relationship to men and to mixed groups. We think it's important that the Rote Zora make known their opinions on this.

When looked at from the outside, the contradiction in the paper "The End of Our Politics", for example, between having an anti-racist or an anti-patriarchal focus, does not seem irresolvable to us. Of course there's always the presupposition that we can never get around looking for political paths where both common and split factors can be expressed in praxis.

But without considering the real conflicts which took place in the content discussions between the groups, then such statements won't amount to much.

Radikal: You all have taken up the refugee campaign of the traditional line. To what degree did you all link yourselves to the "existing" common ground, where do you all see the cornerstones, and where are your differences?

RZ: Our positions have developed further since the time when we decided to link up with the refugee campaign. What we are saying here is an expression of our own present discussions.

The refugee campaign made it clear to us that anti-imperialist politics and solidarity can and must also relate to refugee women and men here. We share the opinion of the RZ from '86: "What is happening at the moment is a gigantic restructuring of the world's population, whose size greatly overshadows the migration movement of the 19th century, and whose form in the metropoles up until this time is only the tip of the iceberg." This puts the left in a bad light, since there has been so little consciousness of how refugee and migration movements are the result of imperialist exploitation and destruction politics, and since there has been so little discussion of the situation and living conditions for refugee and immigrant women and men here.

We see a good possibility in the refugee campaign for thematizing on various lines of social contradiction, for example, to make clear patriarchal, racist, and capitalist-imperialist exploitation- and oppression-relations. There's also the potential that the refugee campaign can revive other thematic lines and struggles, for example, against population politics and sex-tourism, labor and housing struggles and neighborhood work, anti-fascism, and opposing European unity.

Already at the time when we made our decision, the social-revolutionary content of the Revolutionary Cells' refugee campaign was unclear and not present enough. The analysis and definition of the revolutionary subject, to which "disqualified proles, unemployed youths, and marginalized people" belonged, is gender-neutral, and yet decided upon by men. Women, if they are present at all, are left on the fringes.

Behind this hides the hope that a certain segment of the population can be designated as the revolutionary subject based upon social and economic criteria. We think this is wrong, because the riots and revolts of this so-called underclass then get analyzed and over-valued. We have given up looking for THE revolutionary subject, and we do not see it in refugee women and men.

Opting for the refugee campaign was, for us, an attempt to seek some common ground with open groups already working in this area. We think it's important that political work is done on all levels to resist imperialist refugee policies, and that cooperative work is developed along side the refugee and immigrant women and men themselves.

A further difference lies in our experiences in solidarity work and anti-racist work. These things clearly influenced our discussions and proposals. Working together with refugee and immigrant women and men, and experiences with their own struggles, these things forced the left (which was and is active in this area) to discuss its own racist structures and to test out its notions of anti-racist work. Along with this, we also had to discuss, for the first time, the notion of racism as a fundamental pillar in the pushing through of exploitative

relations and their present-day form. You can't just wish your own racist structures away, rather this is much more straining and difficult that was originally thought.

Radikal: How do you envision a broadening of the social base through an engagement in the refugee campaign? The discussion of this theme requires a high level of consciousness, and thus seems to get stuck in limited circles and interests. Perhaps a social-revolutionary approach could better be followed in neighborhood, squatting, or labor struggles?

RZ: Of course we hope to find a social base for our politics, one that can possibly broaden. But for us, the question remains: What content do present-day struggles contain? Men lack self-criticism of patriarchal content, and they reproduce these in their relations, just as whites generally are not willing to take on the consequences of racist oppression, which is something we also profit from. This approach requires a consciousness and a willingness to discuss your own ties to the system. But sadly, this is not the rule. But that's why an attempt at thematizing on forms of oppression is so necessary.

Under certain circumstances, there is a bigger chance that struggles will develop and broaden from neighborhood, squatting, and workers' struggles, because their perspective implies a bettering of their own conditions. But such struggles are not by definition emancipatory. For example, the struggle to keep your job can be tied to racist relations and racist exclusionism. The racist consensus in the society makes it clear that we need anti-racist work to be carried out in all reaches of society.

Radikal: Except for a few analytical notions in some communiques (Lufthansa Cologne 10/86, Muenster and Duesseldorf 5/89, administrative office in Boeblingen 8/91), the refugee campaign has not had a real anti-patriarchal outlook and thus has not developed any forms of practical change. And the one paper on this theme, "What is Patriarchy?", came out of nowhere and did not mention the refugee campaign, and it did not result in any conclusions, reactions, or discussions among the Revolutionary Cells. Within the Revolutionary Cells, neither a theoretical nor a practical outlook was developed, and no attempts were made to take up this theme. The authors of the paper "The End of Our Politics" characterize their level of development on this theme as not politically viable. How do you all see this? Do you all discuss the possibilities for how men or mixed groups can make practical attempts and actions against patriarchal and sexist structures? And if not, why?

RZ: In the three communiques you mentioned, the references made to patriarchy were not very comprehensive. We think they are indicative of the level of development of the present-days groups with regard to the anti-patriarchy discussion. As far as women are concerned, they certainly are not indicative of the level of their discussions, but rather more of that of the men in the groups.

In our group, the women do not advance positions that the men themselves have not worked on. That means a permanent political contradiction for the women in the group. For the men, it means further advancing their own discussion of patriarchy, to give the group a better basis for further praxis. The women don't feel that a better basis is just discussions of feminist theories and working with anti-patriarchal themes, but also destroying such relations in ourselves and in the group.

The reality for the men is that this advance has not really come about, but rather has hit upon conflicts and confrontations. Thus, they limit the possibilities for action and expression by the women in the group. If the women reflect upon all the contradictions and various differences in starting-points between the women and men, then there seems to be little basis to justify a mixed group. The fact that the group does exist is due to our history and the conditions which have arisen from this. The contradictions and fragility behind this decision means that our association is always in question or in crisis.

This has been the case up until today in the patriarchy discussion between men and women in the left-radical movement nation-wide, and it has set the conditions for mixed-group politics. As for the men, the discussion paper "What is Patriarchy?" is an example of this. This paper did not advance the discussion among men very much, because typically the male roles were left out. This distance was clear to us in the language, among other things. It did not seem like a group discussion.

A discussion of these problems has put us in a situation of contradiction and conflict more than once. Not only the theoretical unclarities, but especially the relations of men and women amongst themselves often revealed the gaps between an attempt and a lack of change. We need to take the necessary amount of time for this discussion. But still, this independent discussion among men needs to be visible to the women, so that the foundations for mixed-group politics can continue to exist.

To summarize everything once again: As for the possibilities for practical initiatives and actions against sexist structures, we are weighed down by all the uncertainties and reservations. On a theoretical level, we have arrived at a consensus, which was nonetheless possible despite the conflicts, but that doesn't mean that it has always been a liberating experience for the women.

The objects, structures, and people that can be attacked from out of feminist associations cannot be proposed as targets for attack by us, a mixed group, given our present condition. As a mixed group, we think it's right to point out the sexist structures in all attack targets, and there's much to be done as far as this is concerned, and this could give a basis which allows for more possibilities on the perspective level.

These conflicts, which also break out between men and women in mixed left-radical groups, need to be openly discussed, in order to make possible a further development of content and praxis.

Radikal: The Revolutionary Cells' practical targets for attacks

during the refugee campaign were generally the institutions and organs responsible for state racism against refugee and immigrant women and men. The theoretical basis of the refugee campaign is more broadly envisioned. There, links are made between imperialist exploitation, the plundering of entire continents, the collapse of subsistence economies, and thereby the basis of life for millions of people, and these are seen as causes for the global tide of refugees. These links are not visible in the targets attacked. But surely there could have been some actions during the refugee campaign which also made clear the imperialist foundation of state refugee policies. For example, the Rote Zora action against the Adler corporation, whose orientation encompassed several different themes: 1) Productions by a metropolitan corporation in a nation of the Three Continents. 2) The exploitation of women's labor. 3) Intervention in an actual labor struggle.

Have there been discussions about not doing this, seeing it as too big to handle? Were there political arguments for concentrating exclusively on objects and persons responsible for state racism?

RZ: We can only answer this question in reference to ourselves, because we did not take part in the internal discussions within the Revolutionary Cells, nor do we now. In the way in which the refugee campaign began and further developed, it seemed plausible to us to concentrate momentarily on state racism as the target for attack. It was made clear what role the ruling powers' refugee politics plays, and how it is pushed through at the different levels, from the social bureaus to the refugee divisions to the administrative courts. Along side the structural manner of functioning, the campaign was also a discussion of those persons who are responsible, to expose the racism of the typewriter bastards. On a perspective level, we think this campaign can be expanded, because it has a theoretical basis. It offers the possibility of dealing with all exploitative relations and structures of exclusion, both in terms of their differences as well as how they function together.

Practical change can only come on the basis of a fundamental content which gets worked out (see the discussion of patriarchy in the previous question). Of course there can be attacks against women traders in the refugee campaign, people who make their money in the slave trade of refugee and immigrant women. There can also be attacks on corporations and capitalists, who make capital by employing the refugee and immigrant women and men who must sell their labor very cheap here in the metropoles. There can also be attacks on fascists and their propaganda structures, as well as attacks on the mainstream media, which carries out racist and sexist smear-campaigns against refugee and immigrant women and men. The fact that there haven't been any such attacks as a part of the refugee campaign thus far is an illustration of the present state of the content discussion and its contradictions.

With reference to the Adler action, we have a different view. The Adler action was developed and carried out from women's

associations. Therefore, it's not really possible to compare this action to ones carried out by mixed groups, for the reasons stated above. The fact that this action was so well received, we believe, was due to a combination of public work, an applied method, extensive damage, and the fact that the demands of the women Korean workers were fulfilled. We don't agree that the Adler action dealt with more themes than actions within the refugee campaign.

An action from within the refugee campaign can expose capitalist, racist, and sexist exploitation interests all at the same time. Thus, policies regarding deportations and the functioning of "foreigner laws" work as a selection instruments in the capitalist evaluation of refugee and immigrant women and men. The sexist aspect of these laws is made clear by the fact that women's independent reasons for flight are often not accepted, and this is responsible for the fact that women's immigration is often at the level of the marriage market or forced prostitution. Moreover, thematizing on the grounds for flight exposes the roots of the corporations in the Three Continents.

Radikal: The orientation of the refugee campaign on the leading organs of state racism seems to overlook racism "in the people". Here's a quotation on that from "Zorn-Extra, 9th newspaper of the Revolutionary Cells, Oct. '86": "Anti-imperialist politics in West Germany had, until now, focused on solidarity with liberation struggles in the Third World and on fighting against the war machine here. We don't have any illusions that common interests can be developed between refugee and immigrant women and men in West Germany and sectors of the West German underclass. Nonetheless, anti-imperialist politics need to be introduced where racist class divisions tend to break out."

The authors of this quotation assume, throughout the whole text, that racism is an instrument of class division which is utilized by the ruling powers to divide the proletariat. Today, the proletariat and other strata have shown their own expressions of racism (like the pogroms in Hoyerswerda, Mannheim, Rostock...) and have followed their own interests ("Foreigners out!"), and this has often gone beyond the boundaries which state racism deems acceptable (the murders in Moelln).

The pogroms, the massive attacks, and the murders of refugee and immigrant women and men show quite clearly that the proletariat and other strata of German women and men have internalized forms of domination, which get expressed as hatred of anything "other" than themselves. This form of racism, unlike state racism, does not differentiate between the utility value of foreign people. This internalized mechanism of domination has not been analyzed that much in discussions of racism. For much of the left here, the white metropolitan proletariat is still seen as the hopeful bringer of revolutionary change, and its racism is made harmless by claims that they are "manipulated from above".

The refugee campaign has primarily oriented itself towards state racism. You all assume that the struggle for the right for residency for refugee women and men will remain isolated from

circumstances of the white proletariat. "We still don't know whether anti-imperialist politics can make a link between the refugee question and lines of conflict in the guaranteed sector, but the struggle for the right for residency for refugee women and men is also correct, even if it stays mostly isolated from the white proletariat here."

How do you all account for the development of the last three years, where racism has not only been ignored by broad sectors of the population, but that the population and certainly the proletariat have shown themselves to be deeply racist?

RZ: The faults of the refugee campaign up until now have been self-critically reflected upon in published statements: "Among other things, we see one short-coming in the fact we have only focused our struggle on state racism, on the administrative divisions dealing with foreigners, the courts, and those responsible for deportations. Only afterwards did we reflect on the racism present in broad sectors of the population." (from "We Have to be as Radical as the Reality"). We agree with this self-criticism, although we think the focused initiatives on state racism which were made at that time were good.

In '85/86, the politicians opened a new round of the smear-campaign against refugee women and men, in an effort to legitimize new measures of scaring off, heading off, and selecting refugees. For example, the DDR was tempted with interest-free credit, on the promise that no refugee women and men would be allowed into West-Berlin without a visa; asylum regulations were sharpened, in that the administrative courts greatly curtailed the recognition criteria for refugee women and men. The climate within the population became more heated as well, through the creation of tent cities. This resulted in attacks and violence against refugee women and men and their homes.

This dimension of racism within the population has been very overlooked, not only by the Revolutionary Cells, but also by the entire left, the Autonomen, and the feminist movement. The notion of racism was reduced (seen merely as a tool of division utilized by the ruling powers) or hardly given much content.

In the meantime, we have realized that internalized forms of racist thoughts, actions, and feelings are organizational characteristics of the structure of capitalist society, colonialist history, and Germany's specific national-socialist past. This process of internalization is continually reproduced in people. To what degree the ruling powers are responsible depends on the person, we believe. That means that one's own feeling of self-worth is increased by excluding or devaluing others, in order to protect one's own privileges and material interests. In the process, people are not simply victims or products of social relations, but rather they are active subjects.

We were not able to predict the degree of the social developments of the past few years, and the accompanying outbreak of racism. One fundamental crystallization point for this development was the "Reunification", and the accompanying

outbreak of racism, anti-semitism, and nationalism. The existence of two separate German states was always a visible sign of the defeat of national-socialism. With "Reunification", the post-war era was declared to be over. Germany can now wear its brown shirts once again. The time of restraint and atonement is over. Germany may, and shall, feel itself to be a full nation once again. But this national feeling is not easy to recapture after 40 years of separation. The social and economic differences are too great for this. The only thing which all these people have in common, given all of these differences, is their German-ness, their so-called German identity. This solidifies their status as patriotic German citizens. It binds them to the alleged superiority of German culture, norms, and values. If these ideas seem faded in a few individuals, then there's always the willing link-up to the ruling system of domination. The construction of a German identity requires, at the same time, the construction of less-important ethnic groups, who are marginalized and seen as strange people.

The "Reunification" broke many taboos. The people are once again proud to be German, German history is being revised, pogroms, expulsions, anti-semitic actions, and racist murders are happening again, and these are being seen by many people as legitimate political means and they are openly applauded.

The nationalism of wide sectors of the population allows the ruling powers to, for example, deploy German military forces abroad. Thus, German imperialism can use not only its economic, but also its military power to establish and expand itself within the EC and across the globe.

The radical-left has been generally helpless in the face of these developments, because our political theory and praxis up until now has been too limited. Even militant attacks on institutions of state racism are only one part of the struggle.

That's why it's also necessary to build up legal structures, which not only make it possible to provide protection from racist and fascist attacks or their structures, but it also allows for the possibility to intervene in public discussions. We think it's wrong to take a yes-or-no approach to political means when confronting the general public. We need to win people over to an anti-racist alternative, even if they don't agree with every one of our positions.

Radikal: In addition to "the population's racism", we also think that the "left" is not immune to racism. Do you all agree? If so, how do you all address a self-criticism of this?

RZ: In your previous questions, you characterized the proletariat as "deeply racist", although you then say that leftists are not free from racism either. This manner of formulation and differentiation is, to us, an expression of our own unclarities when dealing with racism.

As leftists, if we say "deeply racist", then we mean nothing less than the fact that our thoughts, our feelings, and our relations are tainted with internalized racism. This is often only subtly expressed. In the discussion concerning white spots

in anti-racist politics, the left is still at the very beginning. In the refugee campaign, this point has not been addressed at all. Charges of racism against leftists and feminists are justified. This should lead to our willingness to address the Eurocentrism of our own theoretical viewpoints.

We can't speak of a common front between Kreuzberg, Los Angeles, and Rio. When we here in the metropoles seek to explain relations and to derive our politics, we can't simply take relations from other societies, especially those of the Three Continents, and act like the people there. Quickly-formulated common links overlook the complexities of domination relations. This is also true when trying to work together with refugee and immigrant women and men. In the political day-to-day, and in working together with refugee and immigrant women and men, it is necessary to test your own relations for racism. Sure, we can sensitize ourselves to act on a reflex to our own racism, but as for taking on racist relations in the future, often in a subtle manner, we are not immune. We often precipitate "positive racism" by attributing characteristics to refugee and immigrant women and men that fit with our vision of them. And there's also the danger that we leftists will learn to adapt our relations externally based on criticisms, but without bothering to undertake any fundamental discussions or change. Men have reacted in the very same way to the patriarchy discussion, without making any independent thoughts of their own. But we must do this if we hope to find a basis for working together with refugee and immigrant women and men. That means actively thematizing on our own racism.

Radikal: What is your opinion of the triple oppression discussion, particularly as it is presented in the paper "Three Into One"?

RZ: We see the triple oppression analysis in "Three Into One" as an attempt to expose the various different violence relations and their interconnections. It brings an analysis which has been developed over the past few years within the black women's and lesbian's movement into the mixed autonomous- and militant-left. Therefore, it is a very important text.

The fact that it has been so enthusiastically received, which does not mean that it has also been worked into people's political understanding, particularly with men, has surprised us somewhat. Maybe it causes some relief in the hearts of many men, because it is one of the few texts in which a serious attempt is made on the part of men to discuss racism and sexism and to arrive at a differentiated position. We can't address the content of "Three Into One" right now, because we cannot do that in such a short space, nor would we want to. To make our answer clear, we are not very far off from this paper in terms of our own analytical approach. There need to be closer discussions of this analysis, and we intend to have such discussions.

Radikal: The authors of "The End of Our Politics" linked the effectiveness of the refugee campaign to the independent resistance of refugee women and men here, and they say they were

frustrated by the absence of such processes and struggles. Here's a citation from the paper "The End of Our Politics": "We never held the hope that close ties would be formed between refugees and the proletarian class here, ties which could bridge racist gaps. But we did fantasize about the desire of the refugees to demand their share of the wealth in the metropoles, as a direct anti-imperialist struggle, combined with experiences of resistance in the Three Continents - and this would be a possible terrain for our own politics. When struggles of this type, which we hoped to make reference to (and which caused us to overlook the "reformist" demands of asylum-seekers), were absent, we compensated with an analysis of state refugee policies and attacks on reachable agents."

In your praxis in the refugee campaign, did you support yourselves with such expectations, and what role does it play for you all that refugee women and men don't display the desired potential for unrest? Or that processes of cooperation between refugee women and men and the social sector and the radical-left have not amounted to much, although there have been some attempts? We don't want to neglect the experiences of support groups, who have resisted state oppression and racist attacks alongside refugee women and men.

RZ: But even the experiences of these support groups and their work show that we have a Eurocentric outlook and that we produce positive racism.

Refugee and immigrant women and men are not generally coming from liberation struggles and positive resistance in their homelands. But they still often bring with them political experiences and they live and defend themselves here under different conditions than we do. The primary interest of most refugee women and men is not to wage an anti-imperialist struggle here (with or without us). Many refugee women and men are supporting the resistance in their countries for the first time. Often, the main interest of refugee women and men is to live safely in Europe and to protect their existence. The fact that they often, in our eyes, follow a reformist and survivalist approach, something which we are ignorant of and reject, is due to their conditions and interests. The fact that we immediately view their political work and resistance as unacceptable, or completely disregard it, is our problem. This is a white problem. We know this "frustration" from false expectations all too well, and this is reason enough on its own to discuss our own racist projections. We need to make the following differentiations:

- between individual refugee interests and reasons for flight and the fact that increased migration has become a problem for the ruling powers and the population of the metropoles, namely it has become a problem for their welfare and control;

- between conditions of living and struggle of refugee women and men in the Three Continents and here.

Refugee women and men can't be seen as a homogenous group

any more than the "underclass", the "proletariat", or women can. They come from different countries and were and are organized in different political parties, something which even makes cooperation amongst themselves difficult. The white left often overlooks and even ignores this fact. When we seek to orient ourselves to refugee and immigrant women and men, then we need to sincerely question our own proposals and expectations, because otherwise there's the danger that we will exercise a paternalistic and contrived form of solidarity, instead of developing and supporting genuine solidarity and resistance together.

Radikal: The RZ that wrote "The End of Our Politics" stated that many anti-racist structures have fallen apart, and that their campaign had not achieved its desired resonance. We see things differently. For one thing, there are, at least in some regions, far more groups doing work on this theme than there were in '86, when the Revolutionary Cells began their campaign. What's more, we think that this campaign was an important reason why many Autonomen, even before the present wave of fascist pogroms, began to take up this kind of work. We ourselves were made aware of many things thanks to this campaign. Many actions which were carried out in '90 and '91 would not have been possible without the "preparations" which were made by the Revolutionary Cells. Do you all agree?

RZ: Since '90/91, many people from the left-radical and feminist movement have started anti-racist initiatives or have begun discussing racism. Whether or not the refugee campaign initiated this anti-racist work is questionable. Certainly, many comrades took a positive relation to the refugee campaign, but this usually amounted to little more than expressions of satisfaction after isolated actions from the Revolutionary Cells. As to what degree the refugee campaign has influenced contemporary political work, that is difficult to estimate and is still unclear. There was never a two-way political discussion. We don't know of any anti-racist group that openly voiced agreement with the content orientation of the refugee campaign.

We think that a far more decisive factor in the mobilization of the radical-left were the independent struggles which were waged by refugee women and men themselves. For example, the march of shame by the Roma through Nordrhein-Westfalia '90, the church occupation by the Roma in Tuebingen '90/91, the church occupations in Neumuenster '91, and the Norderstedt-church and TU-university occupations in Berlin '91/92. During all of these campaigns, the left was called upon to turn its slogan "Increase International Solidarity!" into praxis. And by supporting these campaigns, there were many experiences, but there were also questions within some groups of how a continuity of anti-racist work could be achieved. What we found particularly good and important was that many groups that did support work then reflected on their political work and discussed it. But the on-going discussion was only carried out by anti-racist groups and parts of the radical-left. The Revolutionary Cells were

hardly involved in this. On the contrary, the political developments of the last few years have been ignored by the Revolutionary Cells, particularly by the group that wrote "The End of Our Politics".

Radikal: At the present time, parts of the radical-left are involved with an anti-racist political initiative which is tied to antifa work. In response to the fascist offensive and daily attacks of foreigners and refugee women and men, a practical form of anti-fascism and anti-racism has been taken up as a broad field of intervention. Can you all, as an RZ, see yourselves as part of this movement?

RZ: Due to overlapping content, the orientation of the refugee campaign is very close to the antifa-movement. The horror of the murders and attacks on refugee and immigrant women, men, and children, homeless people, disabled persons, and leftists has had practical consequences, especially for antifa associations. For example, contacts have been made with refugee women and men, there have protection vigils and hostels, and there have been attacks on fascists and fascist structures. But the necessity for action tends to push reflections on mistakes and better strategies to the background. Racism and anti-semitism used to generally be discussed mostly within the fascism discussion, and even was placed in the back. Even the slogan "Against racism, sexism, and fascism!" has hardly been fulfilled by mixed groups. In the struggle against racism, the theme of patriarchal violent relations often falls out of the picture. There are still no workable strategies to combat outbreaks of racism and right-wing organizing. The slogan "Attack the fascists wherever they are!", which is often shouted at counter-demos to fascist mobilizations, can't be used to combat racism within the general population. Other strategies need to be developed for this. Of course, this requires that the Revolutionary Cells undergo self-criticism, because attacks on institutions of state racism don't do much to counter the racist consensus in the population.

Whether the antifa associations will develop a continuity of anti-racist work depends on the content workings and willingness for discussion of the anti-fascist and anti-racist groups. In the struggle against the ruling powers' refugee policies and racism on the streets, there are plenty of common possibilities, and with some work, a common basis for resistance can be developed.

Radikal: Soon, the asylum-clause will become more restrictive (actually, this has already happened, when Germany changed the asylum-clause, Article 16, in its constitution on July 1, 1993 - trans.). A "deportation agreement" is being signed between Germany and Rumania concerning the Roma people. This means that fewer and fewer refugee women and men may enter Germany legally. Many more refugee women and men will have to come in and live here illegally. Will this sharpened situation affect your theory and praxis?

RZ: The new asylum policies won't have much effect on our

fundamental outlook. State policies as early as '86 were already geared towards illegalizing refugee women and men. Certainly, the politics of separation are a means of selecting refugee women and men. A further building-block for this form of politics are the asylum laws and Article 16 of the constitution, etc. We think that the agreement with Rumania, and the resulting deportations, will make possible a cheap detention of a certain number of refugee women and men and will make a cost-efficient labor force available at all times. The agreement signed with Rumania will certainly be a model for other European nations. Those refugee women and men that simply are not wanted will have to keep on living and working in Europe illegally.

Refugee women and men, particularly illegals, are seen as good for temporary, very mobile, and extremely cheap labor, and, at the same time, they are expendable. The ruling powers in Europe have relied upon illegal labor for years. Many sectors of capital and the economy simply cannot do without it. Illegal women must often sell themselves in the sex industry (pornography, prostitution, marriage, etc.).

A further goal of racist and sexist market policies in Europe is to put the illegals under increasing pressure in their existence, that way the market value for European workers can be decreased as well. This pressure is increased by attacks on welfare, living assistance, and social programs, and by increasing rent and the cost of living at the same time. Through this comes a further redistribution of social work, to the detriment of women.

After Moelln, the ruling powers wanted people to refrain from carrying out racist violence against guest workers and immigrants, because they are needed here. But the illegals could be supplanted as a "new" object of hatred, who then can count on little support from social groups. That's why illegal refugee women and men need to be focused on in our struggle against racism. The living conditions and structures of resistance of illegal refugee women and men in Europe will surely change, and it is against this background that our praxis of supporting their struggle will be derived and developed.

The state's interest is to divide refugee women and men from immigrant women and men. We need to carry out common anti-racist actions against this. The clearing of a path for racist selection - even on the part of union, Green, and church circles - must be offensively and politically opposed. Attacks on state institutions that organize such selections, as well as on the representatives of capital who directly profit from the labor of illegals, are necessary.

Radikal: Street-fighting and looting, the use of molotovs, militant attacks on police, many things which were once exclusively practiced by leftists, are now being used by the right-wing in their political struggle, and thus these means have lost their clear definition. Some examples which get cited are the massive firebombings, looting, and rioting by right-wingers (with the support of the population) in Rathenow (Brandenburg) or the attacks by right-wing youths on the police-watch in

Senftenberg. These means are no longer the property of the left. There exists the danger that our actions will be equated with day-to-day right-wing actions. The attack by the Revolutionary Cells on the refugee administrative division in Boeblingen in August '91 was reported by the media as an attack by right-wing extremists. The authors of "The End of Our Politics" represent the opinion that the use of fire and flames today is not appropriate.

The actions of the traditional line against Korbmacher and Hollenberg, or stealing or destroying the files in administrative offices, these are targets of actions which clearly disrupt the right-wing apparatus. These are in no way the targets of right-wing attacks. We would like to see a close and imaginative discussion of how to reach our goal. When dealing with ZAST, for example, and all of the files and computer data there, maybe it would be better to remove the files and computer disks rather than burn down the building. We think it's necessary today to carry out actions which bring into question the "anti-racist consensus of the German people" which the state and capital falsely propagate. For us, this is more a question of clarity than of means. Or how do you all see this?

RZ: Like we said, a continuity of militant praxis is not only defined by actions. Conveying the differentiation of our content of analysis and goals is an important part of our politics, one which cannot be separated from a militant praxis. That's why the question of means cannot be discussed in isolation. With every practical step, the need and possibility for revolutionary change here needs to be made visible, and also the experience that resistance is possible.

So we agree with you when you say that our repertoire of ideas and means could be expanded, if conditions allow. When certain actions are justified, and when the goal of revolutionary counter-power is nearer, that is a political decision which we must make. The actual social situation needs to be judged, that means realizing that fascists and right-wingers use the same methods we do. That does not mean that methods such as firebombings are wrong. The difference lies in the perception of the action, something which is dependent on different aspects: The object which is attacked should, on its own, make it clear which political wing carried out the attack. Today it's even more important to establish a differentiation from fascist attacks. For example, we would never carry out an attack on an unoccupied tent-city, even thought we'd like to see such tent-cities abolished. The use of militant method should correspond to acceptance within the movement. With every action, it should be certain that no harm will come to uninvolved persons.

Another important factor is the present strength of the left and status of society's impression of the anti-racist movement. Depending on strength relations, the degree to which the state and the media seek to take up and channel protest potential is either great or small. For example, the campaign by the state powers against hatred and violence is a desensitizing one, in which left-radical politics and militant praxis are denounced and

isolated. We need to oppose this through political discussion and praxis (in our opinion, this was successfully done on November 8, 1992, in Berlin during Weizsaecker's rally).

Radikal: Part of the traditional line wrote the following in "The End of Our Politics": "Today we see the consequences of the realization that the form and structure of our struggle was the expression of a particular phase of the development of social contradictions in West Germany after 1968, something which has changed since the collapse of real-existing socialism and the resulting processes of destruction, as well as German reunification and the 'New World Order' which was sketched out during the Gulf War. (...) The objective analysis which has taken place historically since 1989/90 (...) demands a fundamentally different stage in the organization of militant and revolutionary resistance. But we can't merely formulate this as a hollow attempt. In reality, we have been overrun by history."

The authors, among other things, draw certain consequences from their militant actions. We assume that you all have not drawn the same consequences? Does that mean that you all do not share the view expressed in the above quotation, or do you all draw other conclusions?

RZ: The paper "The End of Our Politics" made us angry, and for the first time - and it did not have this effect on us alone - it made us uncertain. This, along with the paper on Gerd Albartus and the RAF paper (August '92), was an expression of just how bad the process of exchange really was between militant and non-militant groups. We don't want to ignore the questions and problems which were raised. We recognize the necessity of a fundamental examination, like we said before. In any case, we are not at the end of our politics.

The social contradictions and violent relations have hardly changed their "character", rather they are the same as ever and they have not lessened. The erosion of the former so-called socialist states has a long history, one which began long before '89. It was always visible, even if the speed of the collapse was not predicted. At least 10 years prior to this, the Revolutionary Cells and Rote Zora gave hints in this direction in their discussion papers (the paper on the peace movement, for example). And we don't need to emphasize the fact that no proposals for a liberated society can be made with that form of socialism.

Of course, the conditions for left-radical politics have worsened since the collapse. Non-capitalist utopias are now seen as a viable alternative by fewer and fewer people here. On the contrary, many more people are now reproducing nationalist and racist ideas, and they see in these a solution to their problems. Thus, it has become more difficult for left-radical ideas to work their way into people's consciousness, or to find any acceptance whatsoever. But despite the changed conditions, we must struggle even more against this feeling of powerlessness.

But neither Germany's Super Power lust, nor the alignment of the East, nor the so-called New World Order is anything new. Anyone who as been overrun by this history has either been

keeping their eyes closed or is using this history as an excuse to stop bothering with revolutionary politics. There's no possible way of organizing the resistance on an entirely different - much less a "higher" - level, rather we first need a viable resistance. Anyone who as given up on working on "the exchange between legal and illegal means of struggle" and who no longer presses for this should not be surprised if no "de-individualization" takes place.

We don't think that the crisis of the left-radical movement is the result of being overwhelmed by the collapse of the former East Bloc states. Our crisis did not begin with the "Reunification". The sorrow and mistakes of left-radical politics - a lack of organization and unified structures - have been criticized for quite some time.

Much has already been written about all of that. Everyone has been called on to do their part to improve our conditions. But we still haven't reached the point where militant forms of resistance are accepted from the start. Whether and how leftist politics, and its strategies and forms of struggle, will develop further will be played out in future common discussions.

(from Radikal #147)